

ANECDOTES OF BIRDS.

We select from Francis C. Woodworth's entertaining volume, "Stories about Birds," the following anecdotes:

Jesse, in his "Tales of Animal Instinct," mentions a singular proof of the robin's love for its young. "A gentleman," he says, "in my neighborhood, had directed one of his wagons to be packed with sundry boxes, intending to go with it to Worthing, a place at some distance from his residence. For some time, his going was delayed, and he directed that the wagon should be placed in a shed in his yard, packed as it was, till it should be convenient to him to send it off. In the mean time, a pair of robins built their nest among the straw in the wagon, and had hatched their young before it was sent away. One of the old birds, instead of being frightened away by the motion of the wagon, only left its nest occasionally, for the purpose of flying to the nearest hedge for food for its young; and thus, alternately affording warmth and nourishment to them, it arrived at Worthing. The affection of this bird having been observed by the wagoner, he took care, in unloading, not to disturb the robin's nest; so that the robin and its young returned in safety to Walton Heath, the place whence they were taken. The distance the wagon went, in going and returning, could not have been less than one hundred miles."

A friend of mine, whom I met in the city of Washington, some two years since, and who is a very close observer of the lower animals, related to me the following anecdote: "Six or eight years ago," said he, "I was passing the mouth of an alley leading into a vacant lot, when my attention was drawn to a group of very young children, laughing vociferously. I entered the alley, to see the cause of their mirth, and soon ascertained it to be a large white goose, with a narrow strip of tin bent into a hoop, and thrown over the head of the fowl, by one of the urchins. The poor goose seemed much annoyed by the shining necklace, and ran about, in every direction, trying to shake it off. I found that it was the sight of these antics, which had so much amused the little ragged juveniles. I stopped to see if the goose

would unyoke herself; and, while watching her, I observed some ducks in another part of the yard; and very soon a drake from among them made a great quacking, and started off toward the embarrassed goose. When near, the latter stretched her neck out horizontally, and, to my very great astonishment and admiration, the drake seized the lower part of the tin collar in his beak, the goose withdrew her head from it, and the drake immediately dropped it upon the ground; when the air rang with the plaudits of the children and the gabbling of the fowls."

A laughable story of some carrier pigeons is told in an Antwerp newspaper. The editor of a celebrated journal, published in that city, sent a reporter to Brussels for the king's speech, and with him a couple of carrier pigeons, to take back the document. At Brussels, he gave the pigeons in charge to a waiter, and called for breakfast. He was kept waiting for some time, but a very delicious fricassee stoned for the delay. After breakfast, he paid his bill, and called for his carrier pigeons. "Pigeons!" exclaimed the waiter, "why you've eaten them!"

Great stories are told about the nest-building of the orchard starling. Wilson, who, all must admit, is pretty good authority in matters of this kind, gives a very particular account of the way in which the nest is put together. He says the bird commonly hangs its nest from the twigs of an apple tree. The outside is made of a particular kind of long, tough grass, that will bend without breaking; and this grass is knit or sewed through and through in a thousand directions, just as if done with a needle. The little creature does it with its feet and bill. Mr. Wilson says that he one day showed one of these nests to an old lady, and she was so much struck with the work, that she asked him, half in earnest, if he did not think that these birds could be taught to darn stockings! Mr. Wilson took the pains, too, to draw out one of these grass threads, and found that it measured thirteen inches, and in that distance the bird who used it had passed it in and out thirty-four times.

It seems that the snow bird is a very affectionate little creature. Some years ago, one of them flew into a house, where, finding itself quite welcome, it remained over night. By accident, however, it was killed; and, in the morning, one of the servants threw it into the yard. In the course of the day, one of the family witnessed a most affecting scene in connection with the dead body. Its mate was standing beside it, mourning its loss. It placed its bill below the head of its companion, raised it up, and again warbled its song of mourning. By and by, it flew away,

The following anecdote I relate on the authority of Wilson:—"A box," he says, "fitted up in the window of the room where I slept, was taken possession of by a pair of wrens. Already the nest was built, and two eggs laid; when, one day, the window being open, as well as the door, the female wren, venturing too far into the room, was sprung upon by the cat, and destroyed. Curious to know how the surviving wren would act in the circumstances, I watched him carefully for several days. At first, he sang with great spirit. This continued for an hour or two. After this, becoming uneasy, he went off for an hour. On his return, he chanted again, as before, and went to the top of the house, stable and weeping willow, so that his mate would hear him; but seeing nothing of her, he returned once more, visited the nest, ventured cautiously into the window, gazed about with suspicious looks, his voice sinking into a low, sad tone, as he stretched his neck in every direction. Returning to the box, he seemed for some minutes quite at a loss what to do, and soon

went off, as I thought, altogether, for I saw no more of him that day. Toward the afternoon of the second day, he again made his appearance, in company with another female, who seemed exceedingly shy, and, though not until after a great deal of hesitation, entered the box. At this moment, the little widower seemed as if he would warble his very life out with joy. They afterward raised a brood of seven young ones, all of whom left the nest, at the proper time, in safety."